



Lana Burr teaches Ray Bidler, Sr. the fundamentals of grammar. Burr is with the Adult Academic Studies program of Southeast Community College.

excited, I get excited."

Frenchy says she's volunteered all her life — cooking for invalid neighbors, writing letters for people, taking migrant workers' children to church.

"It's automatic," she says. "I hope I can help people as long as I'm able."

The Lincoln Literacy Center depends on volunteers. Poppe says the requirements to be a tutor include a good reading ability and the desire to want to help someone else learn. She says all volunteers must take a basic literacy workshop that is comprised of four three-hour workshops.

Poppe says the 100 volunteers are people from the community such as lawyers, teachers, factory workers, librarians, college professors. The volunteers are required to give 1 1/2 hours a week to the center.

Poppe says many of the students being tutored have had some schooling, "but for various reasons they haven't had reading ability."

The students work from four basic skill book levels and five challenger skill books. The books are the only cost of the program. During the sessions, students focus on reasoning skills and skills needed for reading and writing, depending on the level they've reached.

“ Watching him grow and develop his abilities to gain confidence in himself . . . it's just wonderful. **”**

—Burr

Poppe says students in the beginning levels concentrate on phonics, skills to help them learn how to recognize new words on their own, spelling, syllables, short vowel sounds and comprehension. In the upper levels, they concentrate on word contractions,

suffixes, prefixes and the difference between fact and opinion, she says.

Although the center tutors junior and senior high students, it primarily concentrates on adults.

Poppe says it takes a few years for students to become literate, noting that people learn at their own pace.

Besides the Lincoln Literacy Center, Bidler attends Southeast Community College's Adult Academic Studies classes Monday through Wednesday in the Old Federal Building on Ninth and P streets.

“ People have to swallow their pride for people like me who are illiterate. They have to take the first step. **”**

—Bidler

He says the work is on a personal level and pace. There is no grading, he says; the tutor corrects his errors and explains them to him.

"Southeast Community College goes more into depth," he says. "I don't think I'd be up as high as I would if I only went once a week."

Lana Burr, instructor and volunteer coordinator of the Adult Academic Studies program, says the program is more an independent study rather than a tutoring session. Burr said the difference is "we're teaching in a classroom and they're (the Lincoln Literacy Center) one on one."

Burr has been tutoring for 15 years and says she has gained a lot from working with Bidler.

"Watching him grow and develop his abilities to gain confidence in himself . . . it's just wonderful," she says.

"It's truly amazing what people can do on their own once they realize they have these abilities, and once you build self-esteem,

they can do all sorts of things.

"His attitude is different. Your attitude has so much to do with how you perform. He's willing to go through things with me."

Burr says all of the tutors are volunteers. All volunteers are required to attend a one-hour orientation session. Burr adds that several UNL students are volunteers.

"I think more people should get involved in helping out," Bidler says. "Students from UNL volunteer at Southeast Community College. People have to swallow their pride for people like me who are illiterate. They have to take the first step."

Sederburg says there are 17 branch programs in Lincoln. He says prospective students are diagnosed and evaluated before they start the program. He says about 200 students a year from Southeast Community College continue their education after completing the reading program.

Burr adds that the classes are open to anyone 16 or older who is not enrolled in a public school. She says that the program is paid for through federal funding.

Sederburg was chairman of the three-year-old Literacy Task Force in Lincoln for its first two years. He says the task force attempts to do as much it can to raise awareness for the need of improved literacy, to recruit as many volunteers as possible and to recruit students.

The main focus for 1988, Sederburg says, is to work with businesses and industries to identify those who need literacy skills and have classes at their place of employment.

Bidler is serving a 39-month to six-year term for burglary. Although he works as a baker at Community Correction Centers-Lincoln, he says he still has the time to study his reading one to three hours a day.

"I wish the Department of Corrections would try to get more inmates to get help with their problem," he says. "Seventy-five percent don't know how to read or write. They should give them some kind of incentive."

"I appreciate what they're (Department of Corrections) trying to do for me," he says.

Gene Hruza, educational coordinator for Community Correction Centers-Lincoln, says 5 to 10 percent of the facility's population is functioning under a sixth-grade level of literacy.

Hruza says for the past two years the community center has been working with the Lincoln Literacy Center and Southeast Community College. He says a third of the center's population — about 100 a year — attends instruction.

Currently the inmates involved in education programs are on education release and are able to travel outside of the facility.

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—Hruza

Hruza says the inmates' crimes may be tied to their illiteracy.

"They've elected in some cases to turn to crime instead of looking toward other avenues of battling their illiteracy," he says.

Goals. Stepping stones to accomplishment. Bidler already has accomplished his first goal: to read well enough to be enrolled in college.

Bidler will go to college in September. He says everything's been approved at Southeast Community College, and he plans to major in youth development. After two years at Southeast, he says, he would like to continue his education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Poppe says many people who go through the literacy classes plan to continue their education to get their General Equivalency Development (G.E.D.) or college degree.

"It's kind of a first step for their long-term goals," she says.

Poppe also says many illiterate people have high IQs. She attributes it to getting so far through memorizing. She says intelligence is not a blanket; many people have not had the opportunity to become literate, forcing them to take low-paying jobs or have someone help them with the reading and writing.

Bidler says his real goal, however, is "to be as good as I can be and get to the point where I can enjoy reading. I used to hate reading. I want to sit down and enjoy a book so I don't hate it."

"I want to try and help other people, if they're in my situation, to get help," Bidler says.

—Joeth Zucco